New Jersey Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Curriculum Framework

A Road Map for Learning

NEW JERSEY STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION 2001

New Jersey Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Curriculum Framework: A Road Map for Learning

A Document in Support of the Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards

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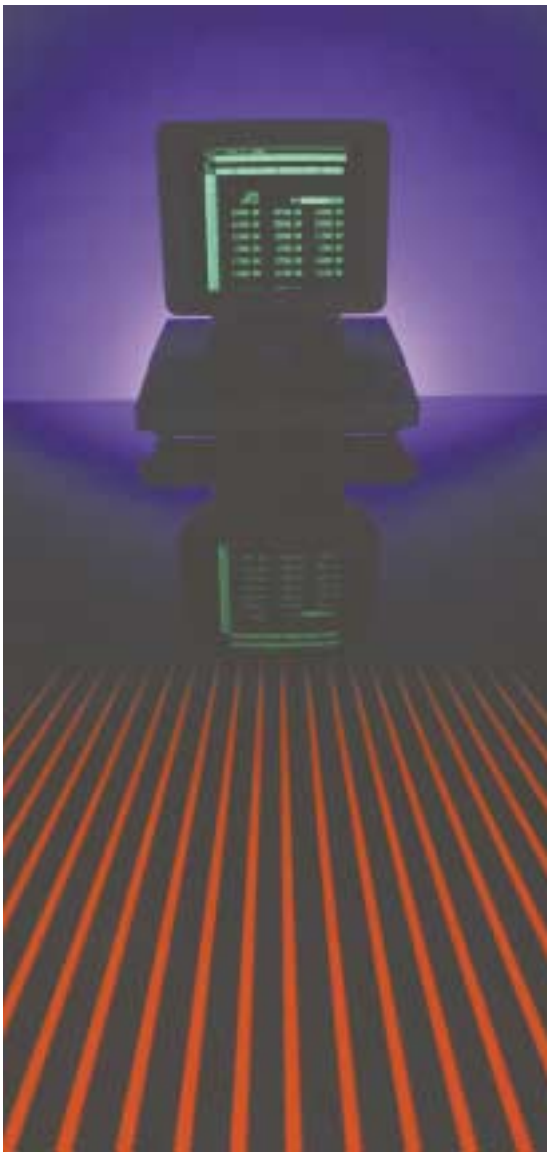

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Historical Background

On May 1, 1996, the State Board of Education adopted Core Curriculum Content Standards, including standards in seven academic content areas and Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards that apply to all subject areas. Since the adoption of these standards, frameworks have been developed to assist local districts in the implementation of the standards. In June 1999, the New Jersey Department of Education convened a committee of distinguished K-12 educators, representatives of higher education, and professionals in the workplace. The committee was charged with designing a Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Curriculum Framework for New Jersey, in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:8-3.2(a)1.

The Need for Workplace Readiness

As stated in the Core Curriculum Content Standards document (page iv), we live in an age of exploding knowledge and rapid change in technology, information exchange, and communications. The changes that are taking place in our society have increased the demand for internationally competitive workers. Because today's students will be employed through the middle of the twenty-first century, they will need increasingly advanced levels of knowledge and skill. To gain and retain high-wage employment that provides job satisfaction, they will also need to continue to learn throughout their lives. The role of the educational system is to deliver instructional programs that provide a world-class education for students entering a complex, rapidly changing, highly competitive, interdependent world.

In a 1992 national report, the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) identified several concepts students need to master to be successful in the world of work. The SCANS Workplace Competencies include the productive use of resources, interpersonal skills, information, systems, and technology. The SCANS Foundation Skills include basic skills, thinking skills, and personal qualities.

To compete in a global, information-based economy, students must be able to solve problems, reason effectively, and make logical connections. The world of work they enter will feature products and factories that are designed by mathematical models and computer simulations, computers that control production processes and plants, and robots. Our state and country need people with the skills to develop and manage new technologies.

The Intent and Content of the Framework

The intent of this framework is to support the educational reform that was initiated by the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards. The standards seek to generate higher levels of achievement for all students and to assist districts in the development of curriculum that fosters lifelong learning skills and the skills necessary for an effective transition into the workplace and/or postsecondary education. This framework emphasizes interdisciplinary and systems approaches and the integration of the Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards into the academic areas. It is designed to provide guidance for the infusion of the Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards into the school district's curriculum and teachers' lesson plans. It is *not* intended to be a substitute for the district curriculum. The sample activities included in the framework are offered as ideas to help educators revise or create their own activities in support of the standards. The standards have specified results but not the means of achieving them, affirming the importance of local district decision-making and discretion. The local district is in the best position to choose the curriculum designs and instructional strategies that are most appropriate for its students. For this reason, the activities included in the framework are to be considered merely as examples. They are not mandated.

A Systems Approach to Cross-Content Workplace Readiness

Chapter 1 describes the design model for implementing the Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards. The framework uses interdisciplinary and integrated instruction, which combines several academic content disciplines in a common lesson or activity. Processes for systems thinking and design are introduced, and their relationships to each other are established. These processes can be followed by educators to create specific instructional programs and to guide students in completing project-based assignments.

Project-Based Learning

Chapter 2 describes the learning process and the steps to project-based learning, and offers reasons for implementing project-based learning. A comparison of traditional instruction and project-based instruction is presented.

Portfolios

Chapter 3 guides teachers and counselors in the purpose, structure, assessment, and reliability of career development and project-specific portfolios for the implementation of Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards. Portfolios provide a documented, cumulative record in many areas of student achievement. They are particularly useful in demonstrating career-planning and workplace readiness skills.

Vignettes

The vignettes in chapter 4 present a number of scenarios that illustrate the interdisciplinary systems thinking approach. While they are presented in general grade-level categories, the scenarios can be adapted to other developmental levels through the creativity of the teacher/facilitator.

Best Practices

The best practices section in chapter 5 has been included to identify innovative and dynamic models. Contact information is provided so that educators are able to gather more information about practices that lead to high attainment of the standards.

Activities

To strengthen the linkages between the academic content areas and the Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards, thematic problem statements in chapter 6 have been designed to include interdisciplinary approaches to workplace readiness. Teachers may adopt, adapt or replace the activities presented here with ideas of their own.

Adaptations for Special Populations

Instructional adaptations for special populations are provided in chapter 7. Experts in the education of the specific populations provided the input for these adaptations.